

The World is not Enough: When the Beating of the Drums Ceases and Poppies Coat the Fields

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The World is not Enough: When the Beating of the Drums Ceases and Poppies Coat the Fields

by [GracefulFalcon](#)

Summary

You do not need to read the previous works to understand this one, although reading them will help with understanding why certain characters have different motivations here than in canon.

“Tell him I love him. Tell him I love him. Tell him I love him,” Will repeats like a prayer, the sacrosanct words gurgling as they spill from his lips. He spits fresh blood onto the puddle that grows ever larger beneath him. The screams have long died in his throat, raw from the abuse. Tell him I love him.

Notes

A few words before the story begins. Alana and Margot are much less prominent in this story because I want this chapter to feel like a blur due to how I oscillate between POVs. There are a few things I would rather not describe, those of which you can probably guess from the tags, and I want to remain faithful to that form of storytelling. It's heavily based on Digestivo, so any gaps can be filled by that. It's much more about the emotions than the actual plot.

The tags reflect the tone of the work, so I will say that none of it is direct, and only the aftermath is described, although it is still obvious what happens. Please exercise caution reading this, it's heavy, and I'm warning you now.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Following their marriage, the pair become more inseparable than before, and today is no different. Hand in hand, they carry groceries from the market. Beneath his gloves, the now warm metal of Will's wedding band is an unending presence. On occasion, he finds Hannibal absentmindedly thumbing it, and it warms his heart to see how his love for him is so present it has become ingrained in his compulsions.

The air is crisp and accompanied by a fair bit of wind as Winter approaches. There was never a formal agreement to stay, yet here they are. Out of the blue, Hannibal stops, his feet frozen to the ground where he stands, eyes widening before a single word escapes his mouth.

"Run," he utters, and no sooner than the sound waves travel through the air, a blunt force strikes Will's head, and grey static overcomes him as he slips away.

The inside of a cloth sack blinds his senses, assaulting his nose with a stench he cannot quite place. Aside from the relentless throbbing of his head, his hands and legs are bound. *Likely zip ties*, he thinks, knowing full well the reason for their ubiquity in such situations. His head is still too foggy to think straight, which is why he fails to bide his time before calling out for Hannibal in desperation. He is met with a sharp slap that would hurt more were it not for the cloth shielding his face. Small victories, he thinks bitterly. Hannibal does not respond, but the muffled struggling he hears from a few feet away followed by the meeting of an angry palm and soft flesh tells him all he needs to know. He should not be relieved, but he is.

The many hours he spends in silence allow him to work out who would want both of them alive, while also operating outside the law, so it comes as no surprise when his feet are hung from a meat hook beside various pig carcasses. Hannibal hangs beside him, hands tied behind his back with zip ties. The depth usually present in his eyes is gone, as if it was never there and only the cold, unforgiving stare of a psychopath remains. He supposes it is for the best if they plan on surviving whatever ordeal is in store.

The journey is cold, whatever temperature control present is designed to keep meat fresh and not designed for comfort. He cannot help but shiver, jaw clenching when he sees Hannibal flinch. The blood-red thread connected to his heart aches.

A congregation observes as the doors open, with Mason at the forefront in his mechanical wheelchair. A rotund man towers behind him, a devilish glint in his eyes Will recognizes. It's garish, lacking any elegance or refinement.

"Gentlemen, welcome to Muskrat Farm," Mason leers. Unable to bear the thought of entertaining him, Will remains silent, but Hannibal has always found merriment in playing with his food.

"Your people might have assassinated me in Aukstaitija, Mason. Unless it is both of us that entertain your interest," he adds, a sour tone to the last part.

"Now, where's the fun in that?" Mason shakes his head, reproachful.

“I see the first coarse bristles of revenge have brushed the ruin of your cheek and begun to excite you.”

“Oh, I’m very excited.” He produces a knife from where it must have rested on his lap, the same knife bestowed upon Will when he was asked to put down the mad dog. Mason pulls down the corner of Hannibal’s shirt, exposing his bare flesh to the Northern Maryland wind. Tracing the skin to the right of his spine, Mason’s face scrunches in a mockery of what could once have been a smile.

“I still carry my father's knife. Ever ready to slip into a pig's back to check the depth of fat,” he explains before plunging the tip of the knife into Hannibal’s side. Soundless, the cut a minor inconvenience in the context of the palette of scars lining his body. Irritated, he pushes it deeper to no avail. “A little on the lean side. Let's fatten you up, shall we?”

Various arms manhandle him onto a handcart, and they are wheeled into a barn while Mason leads the way. He thanks an Italian-sounding man who merely dips his head.

“It is more trouble physically to move a semi-wild pig against its will than to kidnap a man,” he explains, making a wide gesture to the pigs caged in the pens. “There are the tusks to consider, if you want to maintain the integrity of your abdomen. Boars cannot be kept together. They become aggressive, violent over the sows they wish to breed.” He turns his hair to address Will directly. “How long have you been letting him breed you, I wonder?” How he wishes he could wipe that smug grin off of Mason’s face with his fists, but he remains indifferent, schooling his face so as to not give him the satisfaction of his disgust. Taken aback, Mason narrows his eyes. “No? But I was so sure. What with your running away together and all. And evidently tying the knot.” He emphasizes the “t”, tongue clicking against the roof of his mouth. “Unless,” he turns the chair again to face Hannibal, “you’ve been letting him fuck you.” Apparently whatever he finds written on Hannibal’s face convinces him enough to snort. “I didn’t take you for a whore, Dr. Lecter. The world is full of surprises.” He coughs then, spittle foaming from his mouth as there are no lips to keep it inside. The looming man wipes it away without comment. “Interesting, very interesting, I was meaning to say. I’m afraid we’re going to have to discuss this over dinner. We will have some good, funny times, Dr. Lecter.”

Grimy hands undress him, making sure the handcuffs enclosed around his wrists remain visible while they slide a pair of slacks up his thighs. *Unclean*. He filters his expression to ensure none of his disgust peaks through the veil. No need to incite them further. He considers tumbling down the halls of his mind, hoping to find Will there, but he considers he might be unable to return readily, which the situation necessitates.

A freshly pressed shirt is tugged over his shoulders and buttoned, and stripped cufflinks decorate the buttons. He fights off the indecent emotions radiating from the scum around him in an attempt to focus. The stream held in his mind may offer reprieve, but he may as well slip and join the corpses floating past him, none the wiser of the unwanted member of their league.

The hands knot a tie around his throat, differently than he would do it himself. They tighten it too much, unpleasantly scrunching the collar.

His hands are threaded through jacket sleeves, cuffs clipped to his wrists. The metal is cold, making the nerves there tingle.

They hold his legs down to change his socks. To prevent him from kicking, he supposes. His current ones became discolored during the struggle.

Will considers kicking as his legs are free of restraints, but once the shoelaces are tied he is left alone.

Will.

Hannibal.

Trays of oysters line the set table, courtesy of the man from before. Will trails Hannibal as they are wheeled in from separate rooms. They lock eyes for a moment before being forced apart by circumstance. The man with demonic eyes places a plate before him, but he refuses to touch it despite having some movement available, likely for this very purpose. He refuses to give them the satisfaction. It feels like a would-be betrayal, somehow. Eating another's food.

Hannibal does not share his hesitation, bringing an oyster to his lips and swallowing it whole.

"There is an inescapable parallel between you and Jezebel, Mason," he points out. "Keen Bible student that you are, you'll recall dogs ate Jezebel's face, along with the rest of her." So this is a game, then. Will contemplates whether he wants to join in.

"If Jezebel was right with the Risen Jesus, if she praised His name, the Riz would have provided her a new face. As He has provided *mine*," Mason smirks, raising a single eyebrow in mock victory. Hannibal's face remains unmoved, only a polite smile resting atop it.

"You boys remind me of that German cannibal who advertised for a friend, then ate the friend's penis with him before he died. Tragedy being, the penis was overcooked. Go to all that trouble to eat a friend, and you overcook his penis." Mason's expression of horror is almost comedic. Will cannot tell what is worse, this or the fact that Hannibal chuckles as if this is some inside joke between old friends. "They ate it anyway. They had to, they committed. But they didn't enjoy it. I'm committed to enjoying every bite of you."

The last words take an eternity to travel from Will's ear canal to his brain as if his neurons ran out of electricity halfway through. Every. Bite. No one has that claim over Hannibal, no one except him. And here Hannibal is, smiling without a care in the world. No trace of anger nor rage, Lyssa neglectful of her duties.

"You're going to eat him?" he finally chokes out.

"With your face," the rotund man smirks, the corners of his lips falsely turned up in a smile that does not reach his eyes. *Oh. As He has provided mine indeed.*

"Yes. I got a taste for it after the two of you had me eat my nose." Hannibal dips his head in understanding, and Will wants to shake him, to shout and ask how he can stand any of it, how he can sit there, doing nothing, why he is ignoring him as he is, and then it hits him. He swore to never lie to Will, and he is keeping that promise. The mask, the polite conversation, it is all for Mason's benefit, and belatedly he realizes, for his own. Hannibal is detached, attempting to sell Will as the plaything that they assume he is. Two can play this game.

"You must be terribly proud that you could bring this off, Mason," Hannibal counters, unspooling the thread of Mason's countenance bit by bit. "It's dangerous to get exactly what you want. What will you do after you've eaten me?"

“You could wreck some foster homes and torment some children,” Will suggests, his own mask solidly in place. The pieces around their three-way chess board are moving, yet he needs to feign indifference towards one opponent while actively provoking the other.

“Foolish to dilute this ecstatic time with fears about the future,” answers Mason, shaken by Will’s entrance into their arena. In an effort to regain control, he motions, summoning the man serving them. “Cordell, Mr. Graham is looking very dry. A little moisturizer, please.”

Cordell acquiesces to the request, Will paying him no heed for the moment. He and Hannibal go into the details of how he will cook him, but all he can focus on is the inhuman shape of Mason’s mouth as it stretches this way and that. If it could bleed from all of the malice he pours from it, he would. While he appears zoned out to the party, he is in fact paying close attention, so when Cordell approaches with the moisturizer, he lunges forward, teeth sinking into the flesh of his cheek. He revels in the hot spray dripping down his chin, clenching his jaw further until he tears the flesh from its moorings. It makes a wet sound when he spits it out onto a nearby plate, unwilling as he is to swallow it raw. Hannibal, would, for the sake of art and poetic justice.

“If you endeavor to take my face, I might as well take some of yours,” he reasons, daring a glance at Hannibal, whose expression remains neutral, but the adoration in his eyes is unmistakable. Warmth spreads through his limbs, and he feels like an addict basking in a fresh dose after a withdrawal.

“No pajama party for you, Mr. Graham,” Mason sneers, two men appearing to take him away. As they wheel him out, he glimpses Alana making her way down the hallway. The air shimmers, lights flickering, and she stands before him, a horsehair plume arising from her bronze helmet, which shields her nose and cheeks. She hefts a wooden shield in one arm and a throwing spear in the other. She frowns at him and turns away with the vengeance of a child of Ares.

Hannibal stands, his feet firmly planted in a pig pen, his arms restrained above his head, as Cordell finishes relieving him of his clothes. He smells the iron, more so than sees it. No question lies in its planned destination. It produces a grating sound as the man lifts it. With closed eyes, Hannibal inhales the visceral scent of his burning skin, observing the feeling of melting nerves and desecrated flesh. The brand signifies dehumanization, ownership, or at least that is its intended purpose. It can be difficult to dehumanize one who is not human and to own one who already belongs to another in body, spirit, and mind. One might be disgusted by such a naive assumption if it were not so amusing.

“It’s very important to Mason that I have the pig’s experience,” he jests in a tone all too serious.

“The Vergers sponsor a number of breeding and genetic research programs. Pigs have human-sized organs. Mason has done beautiful things with these creatures. Very special.

Truly visionary.” Cordell’s admiration of Mason’s cruelty is of a pretender, someone who cannot stand before their own work. The lack of originality is tasteless.

“He has a wealth of information and resources in his faceless skull.” Hannibal pushes, waiting until he pushes him over the edge. To see what he will do.

“Have they told you the drill? The drill is, in a few hours, I’ll come down here and remove all you’ve got below the elbows and knees,” he says, battling the annoyance more than evident behind his eyes. “I’ll keep you going with IVs and tourniquets until the very last. Some things are best saved for last.” He smiles, composure regained, as he peers down at the space between Hannibal’s legs. “Once you’re dead, I’ll prepare your loins and ribs, aged.” The thought of his death excites Cordell, then. His pupils dilate at the thought, which would be satisfactory if Hannibal cannot also smell it on him. He reeks of anticipation.

“Will you feed Mason my eyes? Eating eyes is commonly considered taboo, as the eyes represent faces and through faces we empathize.”

“Mason wants to watch the pigs eat your face. Like the dogs ate his. He’ll want you to watch, too.”

Will is strapped face-down to a table of sorts. The restraints dig into his joints, cutting off circulation, leaving his extremities tingling and numb. He supposed it does not matter if they intend to kill him soon. His only wish is that he could have said goodbye.

Cordell enters the room, footsteps heavy on the floor.

“Now, at first I was going to remove your face and be done with it, but your *friend* is proving to be. . .” he searches for the word, finally settling on “uncooperative. A face transplant used to be unthinkable, but the improvements in medical science grow exponentially with every passing day. Thankfully, modern knowledge of anatomy yields some. . . less traditional uses.” Will’s eyes widen at the implication, trying against everything he has to move, but the restraints stay put. “You will tell me what makes Hannibal Lecter squeal, or I will do so to you until there is no air left in your lungs.”

Will closes his eyes and braces himself. He knows there is no answer that would ever satisfy Cordell because no one can hurt Hannibal, no one except him. If they knew how deeply Hannibal’s affection for him runs, they would make him watch, and if he is to be tortured either way, at least he can spare Hannibal the collateral damage.

Hannibal kneels on the floor of the pigpen, forcefully bent over himself by the collar tied around his neck. The edges of the brand elicit a tingling sensation, the frayed nerve endings attempting an impossible repair. Nerve damage can present as pain, not solely a complete loss of feeling. The steady trickle of blood down the insides of his thighs mixes with the release dripping out of him. Purple and yellow blooms mar his skin. The cacophony of dull aches is sectioned off to a corner of his mind. There comes a point when the human body gives into the abuses bestowed upon it, yet that point is a faraway sphere well out of grasp for the time being.

There lies a knife hidden under his knee, a prize gleaned from the pockets of one of the men as they held him to the ground. The purpose of such depravity is typically dominance or humiliation, both ideas which he imagines such minds would delight in bestowing upon him. A much more pressing matter is Will. Their separation worries him, as do Mason's plans. Surgery is not an elusive craft to him, and the procedure is meant to be performed when the donor is brain dead, which Will is not.

The presence of the knife concealed beneath him is a comfort as he winds the cogs of his mind. To prey upon the sadistic quality common among such guns-for-hire is simple in theory, yet a hunter struggles to retract his claws, even in a feint. The tears he summons do not gather outside his lacrimal glands, forsaking him as the serpent hisses. *Lies*, it taunts.

Then he hears Will's shrieks.

Ironically, he thinks to himself, how suffering is nothing but a minor inconvenience, a condition of braving the path he set out before himself. He is unfamiliar with the intimacy of it, lacking the human aspect of differentiating between pain and dislike. Will coaxes sympathy out of him, however. The ability to care and to feel is a reflection of the piece of Will that resides within the cavity of his chest. The faint echoes of his lover's cries strike at his very soul, a sickle caught between his ribs.

He allows the saline solution to fall, trickling out through his nose. Silent tears will not suffice. Feigning embarrassment, he snuffles, cutting off a sob midway through. He savors the warmth of the knife nestled beneath his calf as he slides it up higher, just beneath the cusp of his knee. He considers how the hot spray of arterial blood will warm it further.

Footsteps draw nearer, and the latch of the gate clicks as it is opened. The man did not bring his tranquilizer with him, its shape still resting on the ledge beside his chair by the door. A fool.

He squats centimeters away from Hannibal's face, nose curling in plainly-written disgust. He grasps him by the hair, pulling his head, as far back as the collar will allow, to inspect the wetness collecting in the hollows of his face.

"Crying are you?" he leers, letting go of his hair and slapping him across the face with as much force as he can muster. "You should learn to like it and take it like the good little whore that y—" He does not finish the sentence, nor will he ever be able to, as Hannibal wrenches the blade into his throat, twisting the handle with his teeth. The man slumps to the floor in agony, going limp within a few moments from the volume of blood loss. What did not splatter across Hannibal's face now gathers at his legs, coating them in a crimson sludge as

he dislocates his left thumb and tugs it out of the rope bindings. His wrists are raw, something he will have to address later. The last of the rope is cut, and he rises to his feet, stretching his limbs as he squares his shoulders. *And thus he is risen in arms and forges war upon himself.*

Hannibal is about to round the corner when Margot careens into him. She raises her hackles to scream in horror, but he slams her against the wall before she can open her mouth, a swift hand stifling it half-formed behind her lips.

“Not a word, Señora Verger,” he murmurs, rolling his “r”s in a mockery of the Italians her brother hired. “You cannot scream if I cut your throat.” She nods vigorously, terror brimming in her eyes, streaked with mascara from tears already shed. He lets her go, and she almost collapses onto the floor.

“I should have known you could handle yourself,” she smiles, knowing her attempt at levity fell flat. “Mason promised me something. A baby. A Verger baby.”

“Mason will deny you, Margot. He will always deny you,” he says. “Unless he already has.” She only sighs, no need to confirm what they both know. “You know you have to kill him.”

“Funny, I was going to ask you that very thing.”

“It would actually be more therapeutic for you to kill him yourself, Margot. You’ll remember I recommended that in session.” Margot turns away, sorrow written in her very bones.

“Wait until I can get away with it, you said.” Her eyes widen as uneven footsteps approach, the cadence of a cane obvious among the footfalls.

“Buonasera,” she greets, eyeing Margot pointedly. “Are you going to kill Mason?” she asks, the question directed at Hannibal.

“Margot is,” he replies, reassuring Margot as she shivers at the thought. “Now if you will excuse me, I have matters that need attending.” A gloved hand comes to rest on his forearm.”

“I know where he is,” Alana says. “But I need you to promise me. Promise me you won’t touch Margot or any child of hers. I know you said you would kill me, but not her. Never her.”

“Alana. . .” Margot cuts in, but Alana waves her off.

“Promise me.”

“I promise, Alana. And I *always* keep my promises.”

“Tell him I love him. Tell him I love him. Tell him I love him,” Will repeats like a prayer, the sacrosanct words gurgling as they spill from his lips. He spits fresh blood onto the puddle that

grows ever larger beneath him. The screams have long died in his throat, raw from the abuse. *Tell him I love him.*

It only serves to anger Cordell further, the man furious at Will's refusal to answer him. *There's nothing you can do to him*, he had said. He had not been believed yet again. Maybe he is to be Cassandra. *Tell him I love him.*

The words come slower, they slur together like a drop of ink in water. In contrast, the beating of his heart quickens until it thrums, a constant tremor in his chest. *Tell him I love him.*

"Tell him I love him." The words are weak, but he forces them out of his throat nonetheless. Cordell has taken to ignoring him completely. No sound prompts him, yet a force compels him to turn his head to the side. There stands Hannibal in the flesh, a halo of horns encircling his head, skin dyed crimson as fresh blood dries atop what is already congealed. It drips down his hands onto the floor. The fury in his eyes could light a thousand stars.

Cordell lies on the floor, relieved of his hands and eyes. Hannibal unties him from his prison, hurriedly encouraging the circulation to flow back into his limbs. Will lifts his arms in search of him, hearing the drops of blood resonate against the floor as he does. He cannot hold onto him, the bones of his hands mangled. It is now that Hannibal fully assesses the extent of his injuries. The viscera in his mouth, the lacerated expanse of his back. Only his face remains unmarred.

Dextrous hands hold him with a tenderness akin to worship as he is cradled by familiar arms.

"I love you," he says before the world crumbles before his eyes.

The sting of a needle. The roughness of familiar sheets. The haze of some fast-acting drug. The lingering smell of dogs. Will opens his eyes, registering his surroundings. Somehow, they are in Wolf Trap, in his old house. He lies on his stomach in his bed, and the musk of long unused sheets floods his nose. Hannibal kneels beside him. The skin under his eyes is swollen, red, as if he had been crying.

"Hey," Will croaks. Hannibal just looks at him and swallows. His lips tremble as he caresses Will's cheek. The touch is so soft, so reverent that Will gasps, and the hand retracts with an urgency that pains him. "No," he says, shaking his head with what little movement his

position will allow. “Stay. Sit by me. Please.” Hannibal hesitates but grants him his request. He sits on the corner of the bed, thigh beside Will’s head. He is not quite sure, in his drugged state, what exactly it is. Maybe it is the imperceptible tremble of his thighs. Maybe it is the way he shifts. Maybe it is his hesitancy altogether. Will’s eyes widen a fraction. A pause.

And.

He.

Knows.

“Hannibal. . .” he chokes out, the syllables caught in his throat as if someone drenched them in water, filling up the spaces between their fibers. What liquid is left behind his eyes descends now. His sorrow spills from him like a dam overflowing. He opens his mouth but no words come out. His voice has forsaken him.

“Will.” The low rumble of Hannibal’s voice echoes in his skull, a greater comfort than any chemistry coursing through his veins. Will tries to look at him, eyes in search of their kin, but Hannibal refuses him. “This is not your cross to bear.”

A loaded silence stretches between them. Will, overflowing with emotion. Hannibal, seemingly devoid of it. Then, he understands.

“You know what this is, Hannibal, what this means.” There is no need to gesture to himself. Hannibal knows.

The decades of painstaking medical training and practice scream at him. They shout, slinging abuses at him. *For how can he deny the natural order of things?* Will’s words echo, taunting him. He does know what this is. He has seen it too many times to count. There is only so much the human body can take.

Between the blood loss and cuts along the outside of his body, he would need intensive medical care. This does not account for the internal bleeding and thready circulation in his limbs.

“Take me outside. Leave me in the snow.” Will’s voice breaks the silence, and Hannibal finally forces himself to look into his eyes. He forces himself to witness the love held in his gaze, despite his predicament. “Let me fall asleep.” *And never awake*, goes unsaid. An involuntary shiver runs down his spine. He shakes his head.

“You do not know what you ask of me.”

“I know exactly what I’m asking of you, yet I’m asking anyway.” The resolve in his beloved’s voice is evident, and he knows that nothing will sway his mind now. The thought of blue lips and frozen limbs prompts him to gag. He swallows, willing his lip not to tremble. It does not obey him.

“You vowed you would live,” his voice breaks, and he hates it. The world has cried out against them both. If only he could find the strength to roar back.

“And I have lived,” Will reassures. “The last years of my life are worth more to me than the decades before you. Before you and after you. There is no growing old for us. There never was. It wasn’t written in our stars.”

At first, it appears like Hannibal is going to deny him, but then he unhooks the IV from his arm. He gathers Will’s useless body in his arms and rocks him, careful to avoid the worst of his wounds. He whispers sweet things into his neck, foreign words mixing with familiar. After a while, something steels within him. His body attains a purposefulness he cannot describe. Hannibal wraps him in a sheet and hoists him across the threshold. *A mockery of a wedding*, his brain supplies unhelpfully. Will pillows his head against his husband’s chest, unable to do anything but keep it there. He can hear his steady heartbeat thumping against his ear.

Hannibal spreads the sheet out a few yards from his house. An eternal blanket of white covers every inch of the clearing, and only the soft crunching of snow can be heard underfoot. He lays Will down on his stomach, the chill of the snow against his skin immediately seeping into his veins. He marks the ground with his blood in return. A press of lips to his forehead, and this is it, he thinks. He calls the memory of his arms wrapped around him, his fingers carding through his hair to the forefront of his mind so that when Hannibal leaves, he will have something of him in death.

Hannibal does not leave. Instead, he lies down beside him, coat abandoned in the snow. He lifts Will’s head onto his chest, fingers ghosting along his face in devout worship. Will struggles against him. He tries to push him away, to tell him *no, no, no, you are supposed to live*.

Without you? How can I? There is no place in this world for those half alive. The wind howls in his ears. And so Will stops struggling, laying his head down upon his husband’s breast.

May their bones grow old together.

End Notes

I think I'm going to go throw up.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!